SHADOWRUN®

THE ASSASSIN'S PRIMER

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- Whether we want to admit it or not, killing is part of a shadowrunner's job. Ask any ten posters here on Jackpoint and I'll bet nine of them have killed someone during a job, whether it was in self-defense or because they were assigned to take out the target. So it's really fuckin' annoying to see people who often take wetwork jobs, like Balladeer, getting dumped on by hypocrites here because of what they do in the shadows.

  With that in mind, I present this file for your consideration. The author submitted it a couple of hours ago with a "time sensitive" tag. I read the file's title, The Assassin's Primer, and after getting Balladeer's expert opinion, I decided it was worth posting. The author claims to be a professional assassin, and Balladeer confirmed that he seems to know the ins and outs of that line of work intimately. That doesn't necessarily mean you'll agree with everything he says, but the practical advice he offers for those looking to become professional assassins is pretty solid.

  Even those of you who don't want to make a career out of being an assassin should pay attention to this file. After all, if you're ever unlucky enough to have a hitman targeting you, it pays to know how he might operate, neh?
- Bull

- I've also decided to grant this document's author temporary posting privileges. Given how little time he has left to live, I figure he's at least got a right to defend and amend his last words.
- Glitch

POSTED BY: QUIETUS

I don't have much time left, so I'll cut to the chase. My name's Quietus, and I'm an assassin for hire. In forty-eight hours, maybe less, I'll be eliminated by my employer as a loose end.

I have nowhere left to run, nowhere to go that they won't find me, nor will they ever stop looking for me. I know too much for them to even consider letting me live. So as a farewell "fuck you" to them, I'm gonna make a final stand. I'll still die, but I won't make it easy for them.

- Oh look, I'm playing the world's tiniest violin. Fuckin' hired murderer! Good riddance to bad garbage, I say.
- Sticks

- That's rich, coming from a guy who aids sex traffickers for a living.
- Netcat

In the past few days I've thought a lot about what I want to leave behind, besides a body count. You guys—that is, the users of ShadowSEA—gave me the answer.

In my years of lurking on ShadowSEA, I've seen a truckload of ignorance spouted about assassins. Some of you see us as nothing more than sociopathic monsters, killing because we enjoy it, with the money being just a bonus. Others think we're remorseless mercenaries who view our targets as our paychecks and nothing else. Even more disturbing than those misconceptions are those aspiring assassins who buy into them, either out of a misguided belief that they're "cool" or "badass," or because they believe that they *must* abandon all of their humanity to succeed as an assassin.

The most depressing things I see, however, are the shadowrunners who set out to do this job without any knowledge of how to start. I've heard way too many stories about novices getting killed because of ignorance, dead because nobody taught them the basics of survival in this line of work.

- Sink or swim. That's the only way you know who's worth a damn in the shadows. The corps and cops don't have any mercy on novice runners, so why should we?
- Clockwork

- Maybe because we're supposed to be better than the corps and cops? If more people took the time to actually teach novices, don't you think the result might be more good shadowrunners? Maybe then we could actually do some lasting damage to the damn megacorps.
- Aufheben

So I've decided to leave this file as my legacy to the shadow community. I hope I can dispel the illusions and myths about assassins while teaching those who want to become one how to do the job well. More than anything, I want to show that being an assassin and an honorable man is not a contradiction.

WHO BECOMES AN ASSASSIN?

As far as historians can tell, the first to be called assassins were the members of Order of Assassins, a band of fanatical devotees to a man named Hassan-i Sabbah that formed in 1080 ACE. Members of the Nizari Ismaili sect of Islam, they were trained in the ways of disguise and stealth, silently slaying their targets. They carried out hits for both sides of the Crusades at the direction of their leader.

- Don't forget where the word "assassin" comes from—*hashshashin*, from their use of hashish to give them visions of the paradise that awaited them if they killed who their master told them to.
- Slamm-0!

- *Sigh* I should have guessed that long-debunked piece of folklore would come up pretty quick. The truth is that the word *hashshashin* was derived from the word *hashishi*, which meant "outcast" or "rabble" and was used as an insult against followers of the Nizari Ismaili sect of Islam in the 12th century.

Medieval Western historians a few centuries later painted the Ismailis as fanatical killers, and centuries after that some over-imaginative Western historians connected the word *hashishi* with the drug hashish. Thus, the "drug-addled contract killers" story was born. Hassan-i Sabbah was an Ismaili, true, but other than that it's just fanciful storytelling.

- Glitch

Flash forward about a thousand years, and things haven't changed much. The job, at its heart, is the same that it's always been: killing a target without attracting attention, alerting guards, being identified, or leaving any clues that could trace the hit back to you or your employer. This means that deception and stealth are still the cornerstones of the profession. You're not going to make it as an assassin by yelling a war cry and spraying the room your target's in with machine gun fire.

- Not that some bone-headed sprawl gangers don't try this method. They call themselves "assassins" despite the fact that the only planning they've done for the hit is bringing ten times the bullets they'll really need. Some of these morons even manage to make a name for themselves in the Barrens, but the second they try to hit a target outside of a Z-zone, they get geeked by the target or killed by the cop responding to the disturbance they caused. When it comes right down to it, being an assassin isn't just a matter of being able to kill; it's knowing *how to kill without being noticed* and how to reach the target in order to make the hit possible.
- Balladeer

Of course, not everything is the same as it was back in the Crusades Era. Some assassins still work for large organizations such as Aztechnology's *otonin* warriors, the ninja employed by the yakuza, and SEAL Team Six (surprised to see that last one on the list? What do you think they do—bust in and explain to the bad guys the error of their ways?). However, many other assassins are independents working toward their own goals or simply trying to make a living.

Every assassin has their own reasons for taking up the profession, but from what I've seen over the years, they can be divided into a few broad categories:

THE DESPERATE

These are the assassins who go into the job because they have no other marketable skills and need to make a living any way they can. This isn't a criticism of their ability or professionalism. I've worked with quite a few highly skilled, professional assassins who started doing the job because they had the bad luck to be born in the Redmond Barrens and knew nothing else besides killing.

Unfortunately, while these assassins *can* become professional and experienced, far too many become the "war cry and wild gunfire" types I mentioned above. There isn't exactly an official mentorship program they can sign up for at the local community center, but that sort of instruction is usually what's needed for aspiring assassins to become professionals. The lucky ones find a mentor on the streets who can actually teach them something and move on up as a result. The unlucky ones usually end up dead pretty quick.

- What about the self-taught experts? You know, the ones that worked their way up from the streets all the way to the big time with nothing but a gun and their wits? Shadowrunners do that all the time—just look at me. Why not assassins?
- /dev/grrl

- Ignoring for the moment that it's arguable whether you've proven yourself as a shadowrunner, kid … I'd say the big difference is that the learning curve is much steeper as an assassin than it is for a shadowrunner. Sure, professionals come up from the streets in both professions, but I'd say a lot more people die making the climb to becoming a professional assassin than a professional shadowrunner. With shadowrunning the job can be a lot of things; stealing something, extracting someone, sabotage—jobs that corporate guards might not immediately react to with deadly force when guarding against. As an assassin, the job is always going to involve killing someone. This means the target and those guarding him will almost always react with deadly force.

  As for running away and living to fight another day, you can do that if an assassination job goes wrong, but it might be a while before you live that down. Assassination jobs outside of places like the Barrens require a certain level of skill, and a failure of that magnitude doesn't reflect well on one's aptitude. Shadowrunners can come back from a botched run easier because they usually work in teams. If a runner with a bad job on his record runs with a more experienced team that can cover for his weaknesses, he can usually recover his rep as long as he doesn't majorly screw up. Assassins usually don't have that option, since they typically work alone.
- Balladeer

THE PSYCHOS

Okay, let's address the elephant in the room. There *are* psycho assassins who get into the job because they love to kill. Everything else they get out of it, whether it's the money or the street cred, is secondary to the power trip they get from ending another person's life. I'm sure as hell not going to provide an in-depth psychoanalysis of these guys—I don't want that particular Abyss staring back into me in my final hours. However, I will share what I know of them in case you find one of them on your ass.

With these guys, it's all about the thrill of being a death dealer. Holding the power of life and death in their hands is an addiction stronger than any BTL can offer, and who doesn't want to make a living doing what they love? Depending on what specifically is going wrong in their brain case, it might be the quick kill that gives them the most

pleasure, or they might get a kick out of toying with their prey before moving in. On the other hand, they might whet their sick appetites by killing the target's family, friends, business associates, casual acquaintances, and former roommates before moving on to the actual mark.

Really, there are a lot of forms that these guys' damage might take, but it's extremely important not to discount these assassins' habits. Knowing what gives these wackjobs an adrenaline rush can give you an advantage. For example, knowing that the person trying to kill you picks off his targets' friends and family first can give you the forewarning you need to get your loved ones out of harm's way, or it might help you predict where he'll strike next. And if you get the chance to take the psycho out, show no mercy. Because he sure won't.

- If you have one of these guys on your tail, it really pays to know somebody who works with human behavior. I don't just mean a psychologist either; the UCAS FBI and other law-enforcement agencies and corps have entire departments of analysts that do nothing but analyze criminals' behavior based on the clues they leave behind and the actions they take. Having an in with them and their knowledge of psychology can give you the edge you need to save your life or those of your friends.
- The Smiling Bandit

THE IDEALIST

Finally, we come to the idealists—those who truly believe in a cause, and believe that killing is the only way to bring about that cause's success. Of course, that description covers just about everything from religious fanatics killing unbelievers to legitimate soldiers killing their nation's enemies.

With these assassins, the biggest thing to keep in mind is that the cause is all that matters to them, and they will often stop at nothing to complete the job. Trying to bribe them won't work, nor will using other team members as human shields. *Especially* using teammates as human shields. Do that, and you'll have both an assassin targeting you *and* pissed off teammates ready to throw you under the bus.

Don't go thinking that all idealist assassins are fighters for justice like some comic book superhero. Yeah, there are some of those, but there are others who have no limits to the lengths they'll go for their cause. Ever looked into the eyes of a man who thinks killing you is a sacred mission from God? I have, and it's not an experience I care to repeat. Nor is it an experience you want to have.

- Okay hitman, cards on the table here. Which of these categories do you fall into?
- Kane

- I had a feeling someone was going to ask that question. I would call myself an idealist of the non-psychotic variety. To understand why, you need to understand my life.

I was born to a poor family in Greece, living the sort of life that most of the SINless people are probably familiar with; unemployed parents, stealing food to feed my family, piss-poor education at best, everything. Life got even worse in my teenage years when the Alliance for Allah swept into the country in 2034. My entire family was among the quarter of Greece's population killed by the invading fanatics.

Alone, poor, and pissed off at the world for making my life suck even worse than it had before, I survived by doing the same thieving I'd done all my life. A few years later, however, I saw a news story about Mullah Sayid Jazrir's assassination. Jazrir was the head of the Alliance for Allah, and with his death that coalition of religious wackjobs flew apart at the seams. The bastards that killed my family had been completely undone by the death of a single man.

That was when I realized the power of individuals to change the world. By killing one man, whoever assassinated Mullah Jazrir saved many lives that could have been lost had the Second Ottoman Jihad continued. It was the first bit of hope I'd had since my family died, and I seized it with both hands. I was determined to make a difference in the world by doing what that man did; eliminating the sort of people who started senseless wars like the Second Ottoman Jihad, and ensuring that there would be fewer people who suffered like I did as a result.

Since then, I've made a career out of hunting those who lead others to kill their fellow man, like religious fanatics and corporate war profiteers, or people who otherwise simply need to die because of the heinous natures of their crimes.

- Quietus

- Geez, lay it on a bit thicker, Melodrama Man. And talk about delusions of grandeur!
- /dev/grrl

- Give the guy a break, kid. The superhero-esque "saving the world" crap and the bleeding-heart viewpoint annoy the shit out of me too, but he's got the right idea at the core: get out there and make the world, or at least a little part of it, into something more to your liking through sheer force of will. How do you think I got to where I am today?
- Kane

- By pillaging, thieving, and murdering?
- Aufheben

- Exactly. That's my method of exercising my will on the world, just as Quietus' was becoming an assassin. We have different methods and different outcomes we're working towards, but the same goal at the core.
- Kane

- So how did you get your start in the assassin business, Quietus? School of hard knocks or formal mentorship?
- Hard Exit

- Mentorship. I was lucky enough to make contact with a professional assassin in Athens that was serious about teaching an apprentice how to make a living in this line of work. He was also quite the idealist himself. He was a little wacky, claiming to be descended from the Spartan King Leonidas and saying that fighting for justice as an assassin was his "blood destiny" as a result, but the advice he gave has kept me alive for several decades now, and I never would have made it this far without the knowledge he gave me.
- Quietus

- Don't we have enough people in the world making judgment calls of who lives and dies based on their personal morality? As a matter of fact, aren't those exactly the sort of people that killed Quietus' parents and led him to where he is today?
- Kay St. Irregular

- Believe me, Irregular, the irony of that is not lost on me.
- Quietus

THE HONORABLE KILLER

Among the ranks of the idealist archetype that I mentioned above, there are assassins who dedicate themselves to their causes and beliefs to even greater degrees. They are driven by the same motivations as other idealists, but they also adopt a strict code that governs how they live their lives and conduct themselves on the job. For lack of a more neutral term, I refer to them as "honorable killers."

I proudly count myself among these assassins. In my opinion, it's only these codes of honor that separate assassins from the cold-blooded murderers who prey on the weak and defenseless every day in sprawls across the world. In a job that involves dealing death on a regular basis, it's far too easy to cross the line from "professional assassin" to "soulless monster," and that's not a transition I ever want to make.

- Oh, gag me with a fucking vibroblade.
- Clockwork

- Here's where I have to part opinions with our author. I'm not saying that you have to make a habit of shooting children in order to be a successful assassin, but thinking you can adhere to a strict "code of honor" while being an effective assassin is hopelessly naïve. When you're in this line of work, you have to do whatever it takes to survive and get the job done, and "whatever it takes" is not always going to be pleasant. Sooner or later, strictly adhering to a code of honor is going to get you stuck in a position where you'll have to make a choice between violating that code or dying. While you're busy agonizing over which way to go, you'll catch a bullet through the head that makes the choice for you.
- Balladeer

- Speak for yourself. I'm not an assassin, but I am a soldier, a profession that also involves taking the lives of others. When you're in a line of work like that, you need something to hold onto so that you don't cross that invisible line Quietus mentioned. I was fortunate enough to be mentored by Matador, God rest his soul, who taught me the value of honor in a soldier's life. Adhering to the code he taught me has saved me from doing things in the heat of the moment that, once my anger subsided, would have either tortured me with guilt for the rest of my life or driven me to suicide.

  I've seen soldiers who don't have a code of honor to restrain them. They become little more than monsters, the sort of people that use civilians for target practice or worse. Personally, I cut out the middleman and use my sidearm to handle such soldiers on the rare occasions they show up in my unit.
- Picador

I'd like to be able to give aspiring assassins a step-by-step guide on how to develop your own code of honor, but I can't really give much advice on this because it's such a personal decision. Everybody has different lines they won't cross and different things they value, and it's things like that which usually shape an assassin's code.

Since I can't give any general advice, I'll share my own code here to give an example of what I'm talking about.

NEVER KILL AN INNOCENT

The first and most important tenet of my code is never to kill an innocent. In this case, "innocent" means anyone who is not my target or directly defending the target.

There are many reasons I have this tenet as part of my code. For one thing, it's the innocents that I'm doing this job to help. I'm fighting for those who can't fight for themselves, and killing them is a betrayal of that goal. Plus, it's just plain wrong. I believe these people have a right to live a full life and to take that opportunity from them is unforgiveable. I've never killed an innocent in the course of my job, and that's a record I'm very proud of.

I have, on occasion, been required to use some sort of force on people I consider innocents, either for their own safety (like getting them out of the way of a firefight) or because they were guarding a target but didn't meet my definition of "directly defending my target" as described above. Whenever I'm forced to do this, I use non-lethal means like gel rounds or shock ammunition to render them unconscious until I eliminate the target. After that business is concluded, I quickly make sure that the unconscious innocents are alive and not suffering any adverse effects before making my escape.

- "Adverse effects?" Like what? And how can you check *everyone* you've shot?
- /dev/grrl

- The big two things I look out for are trouble breathing or signs of a heart attack. The former can be caused by a gel round impacting in the wrong spot, knocking the wind out of the target, and the latter can be caused by shock ammunition. Despite being marketed as a non-lethal type of ammunition, shock ammo can cause heart attacks in unhealthy people. As for how I can check everyone, it takes five seconds per person, for someone who knows exactly what to look for. Plus, they're unconscious from the effects of the rounds, so they're not likely to get up and alert the authorities or shoot me.
- Quietus

- How the hell can somebody be guarding the target but not "directly defending the target?"
- Netcat

- By that, I usually mean people like rent-a-cops and similarly low-paid security guards. In my mind, they're not necessarily trying to defend an evil person because they're evil themselves; usually it's just a paying job like any other, and they're just trying to feed their families. That doesn't warrant death in my opinion.
- Quietus

ONLY TAKE JOBS THAT SERVE A GOOD CAUSE

I will only take jobs that involve taking out targets whose demise will help people. Serial rapists, ganger scum, corrupt suits, and psychopaths of all types are just a few examples of the types of targets I've taken out over the years. If eliminating a man means that dozens of women around the sprawl can walk the streets feeling a little bit safer, or that the people don't have to worry about being shot because they're wearing the "wrong" colors in the "wrong" part of the city, I'll take the job.

I don't kill purely for other people's, or corporations', profits. I've turned down plenty of lucrative jobs to erase crusading environmentalists or neo-anarchists when those people were guilty of nothing more than being inconvenient to a corporation's plans. Turning that money down has kept me on the razor's edge of poverty at times, but frankly, I don't give a shit. I do this job to make the world a better place, not to make it easier for fat cats to line their pockets.

- There are more than a few shadowrunners who take this approach. The most well known are the ones who take "hooding," as in Robin Hood, jobs. Sometimes they do it for no compensation except the satisfaction of doing the right thing. Personally, I think it's an admirable path. It's not an easy one, by any means, but one to applaud.
- Aufheben

TAKE NO PLEASURE IN THE KILL

Being an assassin is a job, not a hobby. I hold peoples' lives in my hands every day, and I have to treat that as the grave responsibility it is rather than as something to be enjoyed. I don't enjoy what I do but I believe it's a necessary evil. Believe me, I'd love to be able to retire because all the assholes in the world have disappeared and left me with no jobs. Until then the world needs people like me to tip the scales towards the good side just a little bit.

Besides all that, enjoying this job like one does a hobby is a quick way to become the "psycho" assassin I mentioned above.

- This applies to the mercenary business as well. One surefire sign of an amateur is somebody who treats their job like a game of paintball instead of like a firefight where they and their teammates stand a real chance of dying. No mercenary commander in their right mind wants someone like that in their unit. First of all, their lack of seriousness means they often don't listen to orders, and failure to follow orders on the battlefield can get someone killed. Secondly, it's really fucking annoying to everybody around you when someone's treating a real brushfire war like a game while everyone else is focused on trying to survive. Extra annoyance means additional, unnecessary stress on everyone in an already-tense situation. And like Quietus said, the jokers like this who survive for long in the mercenary profession usually become psychopaths who enjoy killing way too much. Sooner or later they'll resort to killing civilians to get their jollies. Besides being heinously evil, that sort of thing makes your unit persona non grata in the merc community. You'll be effectively blacklisted by any halfway respectable employer. Usually the only way to restore the unit's reputation is to shoot said psychopath, and sometimes even that doesn't work.
- Picador

DON'T BETRAY YOUR EMPLOYER

There's obviously a big risk in hiring an assassin; if someone is caught doing it, they can be charged with accessory to murder, which usually carries penalties just as severe as the murder itself. That means that anyone who hires an assassin is taking a major leap of faith in assuming that the assassin won't sell him out. If you build a reputation as a reliable assassin who absolutely will not betray the person who hired you, that gives you a major advantage when hiring time comes along. If you *do* betray an employer, you can count on being blacklisted at best and targeted by an assassin yourself at worst.

That sort of thing isn't conducive to a long career, and if I'm blacklisted or dead, a few more bastards might live to make normal folks' lives hell. Hence, this is a tenet of my code.

- This advice applies just as much to shadowrunners as it does to assassins. The corporations may all know that the other corps

hire as many shadowrunners as they do, but that doesn't mean they're going to just lie back and let a run go down without retaliation if they know who the culprit is. It would make them look weak, and they know they can't afford to show weakness. So as crazy as it sounds, the fact that they're hiring you for a job means that they trust you to one degree or another. Don't take that trust lightly if you want to have a long shadowrunning career. Or a long life.

- Fianchetto

DON'T BE A GLORYHOUND

By this, I mean I won't talk about jobs on Matrix sites in a way that can be traced back to me or my employer. This is partly for my own safety, but it's also an extension of not betraying my employer. Whenever I talk about a job, I leave out the identifying details. If the job was sufficiently unique that any details could possibly tip someone off, I just don't talk about it at all.

- Ghost knows some people here on JackPoint could do well to take that advice.
- Pistons

- Eh, it's in our nature to talk about this stuff. Not only do some of us bask in the glory it brings us, but sharing stories helps out others in the shadow community. Its common sense among shadowrunners to leave out the identifying details, but to not talk about it at all almost feels like it goes against the way we're supposed to be wired.
- Kay St. Irregular

- One of the first things my mentor told me was: "If you're looking for glory and want everybody to know your name, this is the wrong line of work for you." That's true to a certain extent among shadowrunners but it's even truer for assassins. Unlike shadowrunners, we do nothing but kill people. That means a lot more discretion is needed to avoid a premature death, whether it's at the hands of cops "serving the public good" or at the hands of employers "tying up a loose end."
- Quietus

ONLY WORK WITH THOSE WHO RESPECT MY CODE

I will not break my code for any reason. That's the bottom line. It's something I make perfectly clear to both my employers and those I work with, on the rare occasions I work with anyone. To avoid any complications, I ensure that I only work with people who, if they don't share my code, will at least not ask me to break it and will not put me in a situation where I have to stand by and watch it be broken. On a couple occasions, I've been forced to work with people I haven't been able to vet properly. One of those times, I had to violently intervene to prevent an innocent from being harmed by another team member. The psycho just wouldn't listen to reason when I tried to warn him that a heavily armed combat drone wasn't appropriate for the type of job we were doing. It wasn't something I enjoyed, but I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

- Sounds like an interesting story behind that summary. C'mon, spill some details on a job or two, man. You're gonna die anyways. What harm is it going to do?
- Kane

- I intend to die as I lived, Kane: as a professional. So no.
- Quietus

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Assassins tend to be different from shadowrunners in one very important respect: we don't work as part of teams very often. Overall, we're a rather self-reliant bunch, and we assassins with a code of honor have trouble finding a group of individuals who see eye-to-eye with us on every point of our code. This means that assassins usually don't have anyone to cover their weaknesses in terms of knowledge and skills. As a result, we have to know much more than the average shadowrunner, having at least a little bit of knowledge of nearly everything just to survive.

I can't honestly claim to meet this high standard myself. I don't know jack about magical theory, for example, and I couldn't make sense of a commlink's inner workings to save my life. I've survived several decades in this line of work despite not meeting that ideal, however, and there are a couple reasons for that. First, I have a lot of friends and contacts that can fill me in on what I need to know. Secondly, I only take jobs that play to my strengths or that I know I can accomplish with the skills I have. This has limited my job choices, but it also means I haven't found myself in over my head.

- If you're an expert in a very specialized area of knowledge, you could do worse than make friends with an assassin or another lone wolf-type shadowrunner. If they're smart, they'll pay pretty well for mission-critical information. If they're not, they'll be dead soon from their own idiocy anyway, so no skin off your nose. There's nothing quite like having a reliable repeat customer.
- Lyran

- Why not just use skillsoft to fill the gaps in your knowledge?
- /dev/grrl

- For academic topics and other things like that, skillsoft might work. However, you really don't want to rely on those for any skills you intend to use in combat. On their own they're far too "linear" to be used in quickly changing situations like that. For instance, if you slot a chip with a program teaching you how to use a pistol and you don't know how to use a gun without the

chip, you're going to fire the gun the same way every single time, without fail. Not ideal for situations where you have to react on the fly.

- Balladeer

Here's a brief rundown of the sorts of skills the average assassin needs, starting with the most critical.

STEALTH AND DECEPTION

As I said before, these are the cornerstones of the assassin profession. Stealth involves more than just sneaking around in the shadows. It involves looking convincingly like someone you're not, like a normal person on the street rather than someone who's out to kill somebody. Speaking of which, disguises also fall under this umbrella, though don't expect to take too many jobs where you have to disguise yourself as a specific person. Normally, you'll just be disguised as a person of a particular profession, like a generic security guard from a specific corporation. Uniforms and equipment consistent with the disguise are helpful, but knowing the mannerisms of the average person in that line of work can make that disguise go even farther.

The "lurking in shadows" type of stealth is still an effective tactic, particularly in cities where there are lots of high-rise buildings to cast shadows. Alleys are your best friend: they're shadowy and convenient places to dispatch a target without people noticing. If a bum happens to be using that alley and sees you, just pay him off. Usually a hundred nuyen or so is all you need to buy their silence.

Honestly, I could give enough advice on this sort of stealth to fill a book, but the general advice boils down to this: stay quiet, block line of sight to your body, and *always* be ready to strike in case you're discovered. Also, I cannot recommend chameleon suits highly enough, though you shouldn't rely on them entirely. Get good at hiding, *then* use a chameleon suit. *Nobody* will be able to spot you.

- This sort of ties in with my skillsoft comment above. Your equipment should *supplement* your learned skills, not replace or substitute for them. You can lose equipment, but you'll always have your experience and skills available in your head.
- Balladeer

WEAPON TRAINING

Familiarize yourself with a wide variety of weapons if you plan to become an assassin. All assassins have their favorite tools for the job but you won't always have access to those favorites, so it pays to know how different versions of similar weapons work. With guns, you won't have too

much of a problem because they tend to operate pretty similarly within their classes, but each model of gun does have its unique quirks that it pays to be familiar with.

With melee weapons, things can get a lot more complicated simply because of all the variations available. All of them will feel different. For instance, don't think that knowing how to use a certain type of sword means you'll be good with all of them. Being able to use a katana well doesn't mean you'll get the same results with a claymore. They simply don't handle the same way. There are far too many different melee weapons out there for anyone to be an expert with all of them, but practice with as wide a variety as you can.

While I'm on the subject of melee combat, don't underestimate the value of improvised weapons. A soybeer bottle, a bar stool, and a brick can all be very effective weapons if used properly, and they may be your only available weapons one day. Learn how to use your environment as a weapon, and you'll always be ready to fight.

PHYSIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY

Which parts of the metahuman body can you shoot that will cause a target to bleed out in seconds? What method of assassination will leave the fewest and most easily explainable marks on the body? Will one drug dart full of poison be enough to take out that troll, or does his sheer weight mean he needs three? Those are the sorts of questions that make all the difference to an assassin, and they're questions that knowledge of the metahuman body can answer.

Similarly, knowing the metahuman mind can aid in completing missions. For example, does the target have a phobia of something? Then study the possible reactions to phobia stimuli, and then use them to your advantage when you set up your hit. There are an infinite number of weak spots that the metahuman psyche can provide you, and if you have a general idea of how a target is going to react to a given situation, you can stay one or two steps ahead of him and cut off his escape.

- Just remember—specific knowledge beats general knowledge every time. If you know your target's mental makeup in detail, including his habits and general proclivities, you don't need to know about psychology in general. You'll have what you need to find the right time to strike.
- Thorn

PLANNING

Every hit should be planned out, and the ability to draw up those plans is part of what makes great assassins. The knowledge of physiology and psychology greatly aids in that, but other factors need to be taken into consideration as well: What are the target's favorite hangouts? What are the layouts of those places? Which of those places has the best security, and will the target have any additional security with him? What's his daily routine? Those are just a few of the questions you need to ask yourself when planning a hit, and once you've gathered the information to answer them, you can start planning how the hit will go down. Depending on the circumstances, a standard breaking-and-entering approach might be called for, or it might be better to take the target out on the streets. Or some other approach altogether might be called for.

Also remember the old proverb "no battle plan survives contact with the enemy." Have a couple of contingency plans in mind in case something goes wrong.

BREAKING AND ENTERING

Maybe once in your career, if that, you'll have a target that kindly, and stupidly, leaves the door unlocked for you to just walk into his house and take him out. For the rest you'll need to learn how to break into secure areas. Learning how to bypass maglocks and the like is obviously the most relevant, but it also pays to learn how to pick standard key and combination locks because some targets use them to thwart thieves who haven't bothered learning how to pick them. It's also important to learn how your target's alarm system works. For instance, if it's rigged to go off as soon as a window is cracked, the last thing you want to do is cut a hole in the glass.

- What kind of idiot leaves his door unlocked, ever, in this day and age?
- Slamm-0!

- You'd be surprised how cocky some of the rich and powerful get when they live in their ultra-secure gated communities or high-class corporate housing. They have so much faith in the security their money can buy that they lose their common sense and get lax about the measures they can take on their own, like locking their doors. I pity their bodyguards.
- Fianchetto

REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

Self-reliance is one of the best traits an assassin can cultivate. That's why one should know as many of these skills as possible, so he can rely on himself if that's all he has. So it just makes sense that repair and maintenance of your equipment is a helpful skill to learn. This goes beyond knowing how to clean your guns (a skill any good shadowrunner should know). This is about knowing how to recognize when a critical part is about to give out and how to fix it yourself if you possibly can. Knowing how to make a replacement part yourself using a machine can free you from reliance on an armorer, though I still highly recommend them for major work. Besides, there are only so many hours in a day, and you might not want to use too many fixing a gun.

- Much as I hate to reduce the amount of business I might get, I have to say that the same concept applies to your vehicles as

well. Unless you're planning to take a bus to get to your target, which I don't recommend, you'll probably need your own vehicle in this line of work. Knowing how to fix minor problems can really save your ass. Of course, for major work and tricking out your ride, you'll still need to come to pros like yours truly.

- Turbo Bunny

MAGIC

I confess that I'm no expert on this field. I'm a mundane, and most of what I know about magic comes from what I've seen others do. But from what I've seen, adepts can have some powers that any assassin would kill for. I've seen adepts walk across fresh snow without leaving a footprint; talk their way past a dozen guys with guns; kill with a single punch; and too many other things to name. I have to confess, I'm a bit jealous. I've been in plenty of situations where powers like that would have been useful.

- There's no question that adept powers can be incredibly useful. As with everything else, though, you can't let yourself grow dependent on them. Like Balladeer said earlier about skillsofts, your powers should supplement your natural skills rather than replacing them entirely.
- Ma'Fan

It pays to be aware of what a magic-user can do, just in case a target is Awakened, even if you don't understand how it works. For example, it helps to know the difference between an adept and a mage, because knowing which one can sling spells and which one can kick your ass in an eyeblink can help you plan your attack. Of course, there are many possible variations within those basic categories of magic-users, like mystic adepts that can both kick your ass *and* sling spells, so gathering intelligence on what your specific target can do magically is doubly important. Failing that, just assume that a magic-user can do just about *anything* and prepare accordingly.

- Remember what they can do isn't limited to flashy fireballs either. The sorts of mages that can get into your mind can be far more dangerous than the ones who can create a special effects show.
- Haze

- Ah, Haze. I was wondering when you might show up.
- Quietus

- Do I know you?
- Haze

- No, but I've seen your name on plenty of contracts that have crossed my path. I saw Pistons' write-up on you in the *Street Legends* file, and I'll tell you this right now: The only reason I've never taken one of those contracts on you is because there was always someone worse that needed to be taken down at the time. You've pissed a lot of people off over the years, rapist, and you're in *a lot* of crosshairs as a result. No one can dodge that many bullets.
- Quietus

- PISTONS, YOU BITCH! You put out one of those hits on me, didn't you?!
- Haze

- You're barking up the wrong tree, asshole. I might hate you for the pig that you are, but I know JackPoint's rules. Believe me, I've been sorely tempted to break them in the past when it comes to you. Good thing I never did, because from what Quietus is saying, it sounds like I didn't need to. You reap what you sow.
- Pistons

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

To be an effective assassin, you're going to need the right tools for the job. Even the most skilled assassin needs some sort of weapon, but you'll usually need other tools in order to get into a position to use that weapon. Of course, every assassin is going to have different preferences for gear, so what follows are just general guidelines and observations based on my decades of experience.

WEAPONS

Plenty of people believe that the sniper rifle is an assassin's best friend. This can be true, depending on the mission, but ultimately you need to pick the specific weapon that's best for the job at hand. You ever tried using a sniper rifle on a SWAT-style door-kicker raid? Of course not, only idiots would do that. Sniper rifles are so ill suited to that sort of job that it's like trying to chop a tree down with a wet herring.

My point is, don't get attached to a certain type of weapon, whether it's a heavy pistol, SMG, or a sniper rifle. Get yourself a variety of weapon types and find out which guns work best for you. Every model has their little quirks, and finding out that those quirks are major hindrances for you in the middle of a firefight can be a very bad thing. Do your homework. It'll save your life.

- Seconded. Firing ranges exist for a reason, to test weapons in an environment where nobody's shooting back at you. Take advantage of ranges in your area. They're a dime a dozen in Seattle and most other cities. Most of them require a SIN to use, but most are also willing to accept a "gift" of some extra nuyen for "facility upkeep" to let us SINless use them, just as long as you don't make any trouble.
- Hard Exit

Personally, I refuse to use any weapons with fully automatic capability because of their potential to harm in-

nocents. Every bullet fired is something that might injure or kill an innocent if it doesn't hit the target. Just having a weapon with fully automatic capability on hand is too much of a temptation to switch to full auto mode and hold down the trigger while pointing the gun at my target. Not worth the risk, in my opinion.

- Oh c'mon! You're telling me a trained assassin can't hold back from using actual discipline in the heat of battle? That's a bit hard to swallow.
- /dev/grrl

- Never underestimate your ability to panic in the face of the enemy. Even the most hardened fighter can panic given a strong enough fear stimulus. Even experienced soldiers have been known to hold down the trigger and go buck wild when something like that happens. Given that fact and Quietus' strict adherence to his code, I'm not surprised he avoids those sorts of weapons.
- The Smiling Bandit

- How in the name of crap do you manage to survive in intense combat situations without a full auto weapon?
- Kane

- Standard sporting rifles and heavy pistols provide as much, if not more, punch than assault rifles and SMGs, and sporting rifles have longer ranges than their automatic counterparts. Plus, a well-aimed shot can do a lot more than a dozen randomly sprayed ones.
- Quietus

As far as gun accessories, silencers are a must if you're trying to remain silent, and any good assassin should be. I prefer smartlinks over laser sights. If somebody sees the red dot from a laser sight on the target's head, that can be a dead giveaway for your position, and it only takes a half-second for the target to duck and ruin your shot. Concealable holsters and arm slides can be excellent for concealing a pistol under a shirt or coat sleeve. If you absolutely must use automatic weapons, for Ghost's sake *get recoil compensation fitted into the weapon*.

Don't underestimate the value in having several different types of ammo available. Besides the gel and shock rounds I mentioned earlier, subsonic rounds are excellent when used in a gun fitted with a silencer. Don't count on using them in your sniper rifle, though, since the gun's effective range will be reduced too much to be useful. Frangible ammo is great where innocent civilians might be harmed by over-penetration. My advice is to always have at least a magazine of rounds loaded with some sort of tracking agent, just in case you lose your target. They might not think anything of one more gunshot hitting them in the back if you've been shooting at them already. The uses of capsule rounds are limited only by your imagination and the chemicals you have on hand.

- Acid can be used to break down all sorts of metallic objects, like inconvenient padlocks you don't have a key for, and lots of bughunters use KE IV-loaded capsule rounds on their runs. If you're friends with a chemist, he can probably whip up a batch of just about any chemical you might need for a mission.
- The Smiling Bandit

SVD (SNIPER RIFLE)

The SVD is an old design originally manufactured by the Soviets. Chambered for an even older round, the rifle is still capable of limited service in the current era. The SVD was used as the squad marksman's weapon more than as a dedicated specialist's tool, although the release of a nano-forge blueprint has lead to its resurgence with those who need a reasonably accurate weapon on short notice. It has a standard laser sight, though most models come with a sight manufactured outside Soviet territory.

ACC	DAM	AP	MODE	RC	AMMO	AVAIL	COST
5 (6)	10P	–2	SA	—	10(c)	6R	800¥

Finally, *always* have a melee weapon handy, even if it's just a simple knife. The advantage of having a weapon that never runs out of ammunition is impossible to overstate.

ARMOR

From what I can tell, a lot of shadowrunners go for the heaviest armor available if they're expecting combat. I can see why this is the case, but depending on the mission an assassin may not be able to do that. Bulky, heavy armor doesn't allow for much freedom of movement, nor does it really lend itself to disguise. Armor-lined trenchcoats are favored by quite a few assassins because they provide a decent amount of protection while looking like a piece of normal clothing. For sneaking missions, you can't beat a chameleon suit.

- If you absolutely have to have heavy armor protection during a black-tie dinner or other such engagement, there are options available. Zoe and Mortimer of London both make some stylish clothing that provides the bulletproof protection of standard body armor. It can be useful when the shit hits the fan in a corporate environment.
- Fianchetto

AUGMENTATIONS

Cyberware and bioware are fairly common among assassins. I suppose this only makes sense, because every assassin needs an edge. Not everyone is Awakened or a virtuakinetic, but almost anybody can get cyberware implants.

Contrary to the movie images of assassins as monstrous cybernetic killing machines, most assassins go for straightforward, functional, and most importantly, subtle implants. Obvious cyberlimbs are extremely rare in this line of work. It makes a lot of people assume that you're up to no good at first glance, especially if you're bulked up or tricked out with the sorts of add-ons some shadowrunners love to get. By the same token, don't even think about getting weird-looking cybereyes. I don't care how cool you think entirely black cybereyes look, it will get you noticed, which is bad in our line of work.

Implanted weapons are pretty common among assassins, though they tend to stay concealed. Cyberguns are an excellent last-ditch firearm to have available, and of course spurs and razors never run out of ammo. Remember what I said above about always having a melee weapon handy? If you have an implanted spur, it's *always* handy.

Most bioware is pretty subtle, but there are some pretty outlandish things out there, not the least of which are skin alterations like dragonhide. Avoid these like the plague.

Given the limited time I have left to live, I suppose it wouldn't hurt to say what work I've had done over the years, just to give a real-life example to the prospective newbies. I've had magnetic systems implanted in each limb to make climbing buildings as easy as breathing; cybernetic eyes with all the trimmings; retractable spurs in each arm; muscle replacement to make myself stronger and faster; wired reflexes; shock implants in each hand; and an internal air tank for those times when oxygen is in short supply.

- Wait a minute ... magnetic implants, spurs, insufferable moral code ... YOU GOAT-FUCKING SON OF A BITCH, YOU STILL OWE ME!
- Clockwork

- What in the nine hells are you talking about?
- Ma'Fan

- I've worked with this bastard before, and his fucking moral code cost me hundreds of hours of work and thousands of nuyen in materials! And Kane, pay attention, because this is the story you wanted to hear earlier.

  Here's the sitch: Quietus was temporarily attached to my team for a job, though he wasn't using that name. On behalf of some Yakuza or another, we were supposed to assassinate this Triad mucky-muck who was running a slaving operation. The yak wasn't interested in the merchandise's condition, he was just pissed that the Triad guy had beaten him to the punch on that particular market. He didn't care how we did the job, just as long as the Triad guy was dead.

  So we track the guy to a dock warehouse, where he's receiving his latest shipment. I figure this is the best chance to strike and I say I've got a new drone that can do the job. I had this custom job that I hadn't even come up with a name for yet. It was a heavily armored drone that looked like a miniature tank, with tons of weapons. It was beautiful. I spent a lot of time making this thing. I had just finished it and wanted to test it out.

  Mister Softy here refuses to consider such a plan of action because it would "put innocents at risk." Like I give a fuck about some no-name whores. He wants to go the quiet route and take a sniper shot at the guy. We get into an argument, and I'm about to start up my new custom drone when he knocks me unconscious to make sure that I can't do it! Well, the Triad douchebag is long gone by the time our argument is resolved, so we miss our shot. We still know where the guy bases his operations from, so he's not entirely lost to us, but trying to go through a bunch of Triad soldiers to reach him isn't my idea of a good time. Still, Quietus thinks we can do it, and in fact believes it's the best choice since the only ones who will be hurt are "evil." He suggests that my new combat drone is the best choice to aid the rest of my team in a diversionary assault while he takes the kill shot. I'm a bit pissed, but the money is good for taking this guy out, so I go along with it.

  Well, the drone works really damn nicely in its first test run. It cuts down some Triad guards like it was barely a challenge, and the rest of my team easily picks off the other guards while they're panicking and trying to take out the mechanical beast that's killing their friends. Quietus gets the kill shot on the target, but as we're retreating one of the guards brings out an anti-vehicle rocket launcher and shoots it at my drone. BOOM! Six months of work and 500,000 nuyen in materials, down the fucking drain just like that! All so he could save some goddamn whores nobody gives a shit about! He never even paid me back a single nuyen for the damage either!
- Clockwork

- So was that you, Quietus? Does Clockwork have it right? Did you really go to all that trouble to save the lives of a few people you didn't know and who certain assholes seem to think are expendable?
- Kat o' Nine Tales

- I can neither confirm nor deny any of the little bastard's story.
- Quietus

ELECTRONICS

Commlinks are as essential to an assassin as they are to anyone today. The most important thing an assassin can do as far as they go is to keep them secure. Spare no expense on firewalls, anti-virus, and encryption software—the commlink is the nerve center of your PAN, and if it can't be hacked, your cyberware and weapons can't be either. Always keep your commlink on your person so that you can be as sure as possible it isn't being tampered with.

- "Can't be hacked?" There's nothing that somebody out there can't hack.
- Slamm-0!

- Nobody here is naïve enough to believe otherwise. But any shadowrunner worth a drek doesn't let that stop him from trying their damnedest.
- Bull

If you're no good at using your commlink to hack, you should definitely make friends with a hacker you can call in as a consultant on jobs. There are plenty of occasions where sabotaging your target remotely can be incredibly helpful.

As far as other electronics, RFID tags are useful for tracking targets that get away, or even for aiding in surveillance. Jammers are excellent at preventing a target from calling for help. Maglock passkeys and sequencers, cellular glove molders, and keycard copiers can help you defeat most common locks, and autopickers can assist in picking old-style key locks.

A note on those last items: you shouldn't completely rely on B&E tools to do the job. Try to understand as much as possible how they do what they do and what exactly they're doing. That understanding can help you gain the knowledge you need to do such things yourself, so that you're not automatically up Shit Creek if you're ever stuck without the tool.

ADVICE FOR THE ASPIRING ASSASSIN

There's more advice I could give, but it's impossible to write all of it down in the short time I have left. Still, I'd like to try to impart some of the more valuable lessons I've learned over the years in this last section.

BE AWARE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS

Everything that everyone does in this world has a ripple effect. Because of the nature of our work, we assassins leave major ripples with every job we take. *Everybody* in this world, including the target, is somebody's sibling, parent, or significant other, and those people will hate you for ending your target's life. This doesn't mean all of them will seek revenge on you, but be prepared for it to happen if they discover your identity. If it does happen, don't take it personally.

- I take people trying to kill me very personally.
- Black Mamba

This applies to more than just vengeful family members. For some historical examples of major ripple effects caused by one person's death, just look at the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, which sparked World War I. More recently, United States President Jesse Garrety's death got William "Genocide" Jarman into office. His attempted Holocaust of the Native Americans drove Daniel Howling Coyote to implement the Great Ghost Dance, which in turn led to the Treaty of Denver. Only a dragon could possibly think of *all* the ways a person's death could affect the world, but it still pays to be mindful of the wider consequences of a job.

- Which brings into question a lot of the underlying assumptions of Quietus' code, and I was going to bring it up earlier, but in the end we're all compromised, so I didn't figure I needed to single out Quietus, especially if he truly is on his way out.
- Winterhawk

DON'T SCREW UP

Not that I think any assassin worth a damn would *try* to screw up, but this is worth saying for one simple reason: When you screw up a job, you immediately become the first target of your employer. Dead men don't tell tales, after all. The best way to avoid this fate is to build yourself a reputation for not talking about your jobs.

Unfortunately, having a perfect job record and a reputation for staying silent won't necessarily save you. An employer might decide to eliminate you even after a successful job. So in addition to building up that reputation, keep your guard up at all times, and always prepare for betrayal. If and when it happens, show no mercy in defending yourself.

- You know, it occurs to me that it might help to know why you're being targeted by your current employer. After all, if it's because you screwed up, that sort of calls your advice into question, doesn't it?
- Snopes

- Since that would involve talking about a job, I must say "no comment."
- Quietus

- Okay, do the math here, Snopes. He said that he was a teenager when the Alliance for Allah came along in 2034. That was forty years ago, which makes him at least fifty-three years old today, every adult year of that spent doing this job, and he's still alive, at least for the moment. I'd say that record speaks for itself.
- Stone

KEEP MOVING

Don't stay in one place too long. Move around, even if it's just to another district in the same city. Switch up the districts you stay in too. If you only move to safehouses in the Redmond Barrens, that's not much better than staying in the same Barrens safehouse for years on end. Getting a ritzy place in Renton once in a while might be the last thing someone tracking you would expect.

Somewhat related to this: Make friends with a reliable plastic surgeon and forger in case you need to change your appearance and get a corresponding fake SIN. That might be the only option if a job goes *really* bad.

- Augmentations can change your appearance at least as efficiently as plastic surgery, and can be more cost effective too.
- Kat o' NineTales

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

If you need a special skill set that you don't possess or if the target is someone you need special expertise to take down, contract a specialist for help or turn the job down. If your target's a vampire and you know absolutely nothing about the Infected, get a vampire hunter to assist you if you decide to take the job. Don't be afraid to say "no" because a job is beyond your skillset. It marks you as a smart man and a professional, not a coward.

- I've lost count of the number of runners I've seen over the years that ended up in over their heads because they were too afraid for their reputations to say "no" to a job they couldn't do. Not all of those runners made it out of those jobs alive, and even those that did took a major blow to their reps because they were exposed as misrepresenting their abilities. It is far more of a hit than their reps would have taken by turning the job down. Be honest with yourself and your potential employer. Hell, sometimes the employer will give you access to a specialist as part of the job if you say up front that it's beyond your abilities.
- Fianchetto

CENTER YOURSELF

What I mean by this is that you need to find something to center your mind and soul between jobs so that you can hold onto your humanity. Personally, I'm a fan of getting a hobby, specifically something that doesn't involve violence, whether simulated or real. The whole point is to take a break from violence, after all. This means that things like urban brawl or Matrix shooters are right out. My hobbies of choice are cooking and karaoke. I'm pretty good at the former, especially with Italian stuff. The latter, not so much, but belting out a hard rock or rap song can be a really nice way to let off some steam without involving simulated violence.

- When did this guy get taken over by an Overprotective Soccer Mom personafix? He can handle killing people for a living, but he can't handle shooting zombies in Paranormal Crisis?
- Slamm-0!

- He didn't say he couldn't handle it. It sounds more like he wants to compartmentalize his life to some extent. I imagine that it's sort of like a "wall" in his mind, and he keeps all the violence on one side and the rest of his life on the other, so that the two never meet. I can understand keeping them separate. When your job is as violent as his, the attraction of blowing stuff up in VR games or seeing Urban Brawl gunfights on trid is probably significantly reduced. That's not true for every shadowrunner, there's plenty of Urban Brawl fans here on JackPoint, but some people need that greater degree of separation.
- Nephrine

- Well, that's the brief sum total of my decades of experience, there for the next few generations of assassins to see. Make it count.

  I heard the sound of cars pulling up outside my flat a few seconds ago. Looking out the window, I can see several heavily armed guys who look like they mean business approaching the entrance. I guess this is it. One last hurrah before I go on to whatever lies beyond.

  Safety and peace, everyone.
- Quietus

- USER QUIETUS HAS LOGGED OFF

GAME INFORMATION

THE LONE WOLF AS A TEAM MEMBER

As Quietus noted in the in-game document, assassins tend to work alone for a variety of reasons, but in most *Shadowrun* games, working completely alone isn't an option. So how do you fit this sort of "lone wolf" personality into a typical shadowrunning group?

There are a couple of ways to go about this.

CONSULTANTS

As Quietus mentioned, assassins sometimes call in consultants or specialists to help out with jobs, usually to fill a particular skill niche like magic or hacking. The other members of the team could be those consultants, a group of assistants that the assassin regularly calls in to help him. Alternately, the assassin character himself could be the consultant, called in to lend his special skillset to the team for a particular job.

Figuring out how to work these arrangements into a regular game might seem like a tall order, but there are a few ways to make them work. With the former arrangement, it might be best to simply suspend disbelief a bit. It might seem unusual for such an arrangement to happen so often, but it's not much more unusual than different Johnsons regularly hiring the same group of runners. With the latter arrangement, it might be a good idea to have the assassin's player play two characters, a regular PC and the assassin, with the assassin only coming out when his expertise is needed.

"LET HIM DO HIS THING"

On the other hand, there's no law saying an assassin has to completely eschew working as part of a team. Such a character can easily be part of a regular shadowrunning group, but given a freer rein because the group realizes he does his part of the job better on his own. In this way, the assassin is both a part of the team and separate from it. He works with them, but when it comes time to execute the battle plan, he goes his own way.

This isn't a completely alien idea in *Shadowrun*. Plenty of team members can be given a similarly long leash simply because their areas of expertise don't make it easy for others to accompany them. If the team only has one hacker, for example, it's not exactly easy for the other teammates to follow and assist him in the Matrix. It's the same with teams that only have one mage or shaman who needs to do astral work. Simply treat the assassin the same way you'd treat one of those types of characters.

NEW QUALITIES

ASSASSIN'S CREEDS

The Code of Honor: Assassin's Creed Quality (p. 79, *SR5*) presents a code of behavior that an assassin can choose to follow. Not every assassin that follows a moral code like the one Quietus laid out above will fit comfortably within that mindset, however. These expanded Code of Honor rules are intended to provide players with more options for an Assassin's Creed Code of Honor that will fit their characters' moral code. Some of them are refinements of the original Assassin's Creed Code of Honor, while others are intended to reflect entirely different assassin mindsets.

Since the various codes discussed here have different effects, they also have different associated Karma bonuses or costs. Note that some of these are Positive Qualities, which cost Karma, while others are Negative Qualities, which provide Karma bonuses. The cost or bonus does not include any part of the Code of Honor bonus, as these qualities are similar only in their intention; selecting that Quality is not a prerequisite to use these Qualities.

If you have trouble deciding which Assassin's Creed Quality to take for your character, ask yourself what part of his moral code matters the most to him. Is it a prohibition against harming innocents, serving his country, being a stalwart professional, or something else entirely? Once you figure that out, choose the quality that most closely reflects that answer.

POSITIVE QUALITIES

DEUS VULT! (COST: 4 KARMA)

The words "Deus Vult," "God wills it" in Latin, were the words that helped launch the First Crusade in 1095. Similarly, the assassin sees himself as on a crusade to eliminate the enemies of his religion. These enemies might be striking violently at the people or holy sites of his faith, or they might simply be "sinners" in his eyes. Either way, they must be eliminated.

While the Code of Honor is called "Deus Vult," it is not limited to any particular religion. A radical pagan can take this Code as justifiably as a fanatical Christian. Note that this Code might require some research on the player's part to properly roleplay his character's devotion to his religion's tenets.

Advantages: The assassin's faith sustains him even in the face of terrible wounds. Make a Willpower check at the beginning of the character's Action Phase if he has taken a wound, either Stun or Physical damage, since his last Action Phase, with the threshold being equal to the number

of wounds taken in that time. Success on the roll means that the assassin ignores all wound penalties. The assassin should continue making rolls before each Action Phase, with the threshold for the test growing with each wound; for example, if a character makes a roll after sustaining two wounds, then sustains two more wounds before his next Action Phase, the threshold would be 4 for the next roll. If one of these rolls fails, all wound penalties immediately come into play and this advantage cannot be used until the next combat.

Disadvantage: Perhaps as overcompensation for violating his religion's tenet against killing, the assassin demands much more of himself in observance of the other tenets of his faith. The assassin must make a Charisma + Willpower roll to act against his religion's tenets, with the threshold varying based on the severity of the violation: simple theft would likely call for a threshold of 1, while great blasphemy or renouncing his religion entirely would call for a much higher threshold. If the character fails the roll, they refuse to perform the action and actively seek to stop anyone they see attempting it.

MY COUNTRY, RIGHT OR WRONG (COST: 4 KARMA)

Patriotism is the core of this assassin's being. He serves his country by doing his deadly job, and he knows his work is justified because it helps the nation that he calls home. Enemies both foreign and domestic must be dealt with so the nation's citizens can live in peace and security.

Advantages: Make a Willpower check at the beginning of the character's Action Phase if he has taken a wound, either Stun or Physical damage, since his last Action Phase, with the threshold being equal to the number of wounds taken in that time. Success on the roll means that the assassin ignores all wound penalties. The assassin should continue making rolls before each Action Phase, with the threshold for the test growing with each wound; for example, if a character makes a roll after sustaining two wounds, then sustains two more wounds before his next Action Phase, the threshold would be 4 for the next roll. If one of these rolls fails, all wound penalties immediately come into play and this advantage cannot be used until the next combat.

Disadvantage: The idea of betraying his country in even the smallest way, even for a greater good somewhere down the line, is unthinkable to the assassin. He must make a Charisma + Willpower check to act in a way detrimental to his country, with the threshold based on the severity of the offense: breaking into a military base to steal weapons would call for a threshold of 1, while selling classified materials to the enemy would call for a much higher threshold. If the character fails the roll, they refuse to perform the action and actively seek to stop anyone they see attempting it.

OUT FOR MYSELF (COST: 4 KARMA)

The assassin knows that he can rely only on himself. Perhaps he's a selfish bastard, or perhaps that's just the mindset he needed to develop to survive where he grew up. Either way, he looks out for Number One, and to hell with everyone else.

Advantages: The assassin is always watching his back; after all, nobody else will. He receives a +3 Dice Pool to all Surprise Tests because of this preparedness.

Disadvantages: This character has proven that he cares only for himself, and his reputation in the shadows will suffer for it. Double all Notoriety gained by acts of selfishness or betrayal.

STRIVE FOR PERFECTION (COST: 12 KARMA)

Excellence in his craft is what this assassin aims for. It is not enough to take out the target; the job must be done efficiently, quickly, and without the slightest misstep. This is what separates the good assassins from the great ones in his mind, and he aims to be one of the greats.

Advantages: The assassin has honed his skills with firearms to the point where shots that would be tough for most people are second nature to him. Halve the cost of all Called Shots, meaning they impose only a -2 dice pool penalty instead of -4. The Called Shot still costs a Free Action.

Disadvantages: The standard "aiming for center mass" shots that most people take are beneath this sort of assassin. He seeks to make every shot count, regardless of how many bullets are in his magazine. The assassin *must* make Called Shots unless he is providing covering fire or acting in a similar capacity where Called Shots would not be practical.

NEGATIVE QUALITY

CONSUMMATE PROFESSIONAL (BONUS: 3 KARMA)

The consummate professional knows that the assassin contract involves a great deal of trust between both parties, and he seeks to honor that trust to the fullest. He will never talk about the jobs he takes, even to boost his own reputation. This makes him somewhat more difficult for employers to track down, but those who do find him know that they can trust him not to sell them out.

Advantages: The consummate professional has proven he's worthy of being treated better than a typical assassin. Gain a +2 Dice Pool bonus to social interaction rolls when interacting with employers.

Disadvantages: The flip side to having as much discretion as the consummate professional does is that it's much harder to be known for your work. Divide total Karma by 20 (instead of 10 as normal) and round down in order to determine Street Cred.